

OLYMPIC COAST NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Meeting Minutes

Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting
May 30, 2008
Ocean Shores Convention Center
Ocean Shores, Washington

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary
NOAA, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
115 E. Railroad Avenue, Suite 301
Port Angeles, WA 98362-2925
FAX # 360-457-8496

Reviewed by SAC Secretary

Reviewed by OCNMS Superintendent

Approved by SAC

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary
May 30, 2008

Members Present:

Terrie Klinger, Research (Chair)
Katie Krueger, Quileute Tribe Alternate
Fan Tsao, Conservation
Teresa Scott, Wash. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
Ellen Matheny, Education
Doug Fricke, Commercial Fishing Alternate
George Hart, U.S. Navy
Steve Copps, NOAA Fisheries
Phil Johnson, Local Government
Gene Woodwick, Education Alternate
Meri Parker, Chamber of Commerce
Bob Bohlman, Marine Industry
Brady Scott, Dept. of Natural Resources
Rebecca Post, Wash Dept. of Ecology
alternate
Roy Morris, Citizen-at-Large
Capt. Scott Pollock, US Coast Guard
John Calambokidis, Research Alternate
Chip Boothe, Wash. Dept. of Ecology
Diane Butorac, DOE Spill Prevention
Alternate

Staff

Carol Bernthal, Superintendent
Andy Palmer, Advisory Council Coordinator
George Galasso, Asst. Superintendent

Guests/Public Attendees:

Jennifer Hagen, Northwest Indian Fisheries
Commission
Justine James, Quinault Nation
Rachel Thomson, Aberdeen Daily World
Neil Eldridge, Director Ocean Shores Interpretive
Center,
Larry Woodwick,

Welcome

Terrie Klinger called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Members, staff, and guests introduced themselves.

Agenda/Meeting Minutes

Terrie Klinger asked for adoption of the agenda. The meeting minutes of the March 28th meeting were discussed. Teresa Scott suggested that the adoption of minutes be moved permanently until after lunch to give members a chance to review them. The suggestion was adopted by the Chair.

Internal Affairs

Annual Chairs/Coordinators Meeting report

Terrie Klinger and Andy Palmer reported on the recent annual Chairs/Coordinators meeting that took place in Newport News, Virginia and was hosted by the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary. Andy reported on the coordinators meeting the first day which included briefings and discussions on advisory council performance measures, the advisory council volunteer database, and a briefing on a potential reorganization of the program at the national level. Coordinators were also briefed on the status of the reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act – there will be no Administration legislation introduced this session, though some members of congress may introduce legislation in the meantime. There were four regional presentations on case studies, including the west coast regional case study on the Cosco Busan oil spill, which was well presented by Richard Charter, chair of the Gulf of Farallones NMS. The South East region explained the processes they went through on some successful marine zoning efforts. The Pacific region explained the challenges and difficulties they are having establishing an advisory council for the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The eastern region gave a presentation on the Stellwagen Bank NMS shipping lane alteration and the sister sanctuary initiative with Dominica.

Terrie reported on the regional breakout session. The west coast region talked about the need for better sanctuary representation at the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. Terrie also mentioned that Dan Basta talked about the elevation of the NMS program to an office, now known as the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) and what that means for the program. Terrie and Andy reported on the final day where there was an open roundtable discussion on management plan review process and what various sanctuary experiences were. Terrie also reported that there was some interest again in attempting to create a national advisory council of sanctuary chairs as was tried several years ago. Terrie reported that the program is considering establishing a sentinel site in one of the sanctuaries and/or estuarine reserves to monitor climate change impacts. Sites also talked about some of their experiences with the “Green Communities” initiative, even though there turned out to be no funding. Members discussed whether there were opportunities to proceed with initiatives in our sanctuary area. No definitive conclusion was reached but members were urged to keep their eyes open for low-cost initiatives or partnerships with existing organizations.

Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) liaison discussion

Members engaged in a general discussion about the relationship of the west coast sanctuaries with the PFMC including the past difficulties and attitudes by both sides as well as the need to move on and create a better cooperative working framework. If there is eventually a full-time liaison position funded by the sanctuary program, members expressed views that they needed to participate broadly with PFMC subcommittees, that OCNMS gets adequate attention from this person and they not focus exclusively on the California sanctuaries.

Carol explained the present status of representation to PFMC. Currently Lisa Wooninck who is now a full-time staff person for Monterey Bay NMS and has 10% of her time devoted to representing the west coast region and sanctuaries at PFMC, serving on the Habitat

Subcommittee. She is responsible for flagging PFMC issues of interest to the sanctuaries and sending out notices as well as summarizing the meeting results, but cannot participate more broadly due to her other duties with the sanctuary.

Doug Fricke moved that the OCNMS advisory council recommend to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) to fill a position of a full-time liaison person to the PFMC as a priority when funds become available. Captain Pollock seconded the motion. Teresa Scott recommended an amendment to the language of the resolution that places a period after the word “priority” and delete “when funds become available”. Katie Kruger expressed concern that this resolution came up with little notice and that the members of the IPC had not seen it and that it is an important issue for the tribes, so she may have to abstain from voting. Steve Copps was concerned that the person who fills this position not just be a technical person, but someone who really can understand both the PFMC process and the sanctuary process so that issues are received in a timely manner to be adequately considered by both the PFMC and the sanctuary. Respect for each other’s process is critical and this is especially important during the sanctuary management plan review process. Additional discussion by members involved the timing of adoption of the resolution. Doug Fricke then called for the question and the resolution was adopted, as amended with 8 voting in favor, one against, and 5 members abstaining. The adopted resolution reads as follows: **The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council wishes to express its support for the hiring of an ONMS staff person to serve as full-time liaison to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC) representing the Sanctuary’s West Coast Region. The advisory council recognizes that effective communication and coordination with the PFMC and participation on appropriate subcommittees is important to the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary as it considers issues of mutual concern to the sanctuary and the PFMC and as the sanctuary conducts the management plan review process. The advisory council further recognizes the recent efforts that the PFMC and NOAA Fisheries have made to enhance communication and interaction with the sanctuary. The advisory council therefore urges the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries fill this position as a priority.**

Finally, Terrie Klinger reported that she had recently participated in a U.S. Senate field hearing in Seattle on climate change and the oceans, with a focus on acidification of the oceans caused by the increasing level of CO₂ in the atmosphere. She wanted to make it clear that her testimony was strictly on her own behalf and did in no way represent the views of the advisory council.

Presentation on the Structure of Populations, Levels of Abundance, and Status of Humpbacks Project (SPLASH)

John Calambokidis noted that the report summarizing the SPLASH study data just came out last week and much of the material is posted on the Cascadia Research Collective web site, <http://www.cascadiaresearch.org/SPLASH/SPLASH.htm> . The study was principally funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Humpback whales have the longest migratory patterns of any mammals. The study used data from 10 different countries. Study platforms ranged from NOAA ships to outrigger canoes. The study area was divided into geographic subareas that turned out to represent distinct feeding aggregations – one of which was the area off the Washington and southern British Columbia coasts. The large movements occurred between the summer feeding area and the winter breeding areas. Mainland Mexico and Central America whales mostly migrate to the west coast of the U.S. The range of the overall estimate for the North Pacific humpback population was 18,000 to 22,000 individuals. This is approximately three times the levels that were thought to exist prior to the study. This is an indication that the population is increasing. In some areas the population may have reached the levels thought to exist prior to industrialized whaling. This could result in a change of the present endangered species listing.

The study also looked at human caused injuries such as ship strikes and fishing gear entanglement. Data showed a surprising number of whales with evidence of encounters with fishing gear. Mitochondrial DNA analysis showed high site fidelity with significant difference between populations in various feeding and breeding areas. Because of the site fidelity, management and protection of the whales needs to focus on the distinct feeding area or on the breeding areas, but the two cannot be linked due to the fact that feeding areas draw individuals from several breeding areas. There are plans to hold a 2008 SPLASH symposium in the fall in California, sponsored by the west coast sanctuaries. Some tissue sampling was done for toxic loads, mostly on the west coast. Evidence of ship strikes was considerably less than the evidence for entanglement, at around 2 percent versus 6 percent for entanglement. Historical whale population estimates are based upon whaling data and catch per unit effort and may substantially under report the actual population.

John gave an overview on some other data specific to west coast whales. Humpbacks have changed their feeding habits over time. In the 1990s they were feeding almost exclusively on krill and since 2000 they switched to fish. Blue whales have shown a stable population with a small steady increase. Because they are exclusively krill feeders, they are moving to different areas as the krill appears or disappears. There are not many sightings of blue whales off the Washington coast, but they are detected in the area acoustically. In 2002 there were four ship strikes of fin whales in Washington waters, probably due to the feeding aggregation shifting into areas of heavy ship traffic. Research indicates that right whales, blue whales, fin whales, and sei whales are most susceptible to ship strikes, whereas gray whales and humpback whales seem to have less of a problem. Gray whales did have some years of high mortality and the population level fell from estimated 22,000 to 26,000 to around 17,000 currently. It is likely that this is due to reaching the carrying capacity of feeding areas. Recorded strandings of gray whales has returned to a more normal number recently. The population of Washington resident gray whales has stayed stable at around 250 whales during this time.

Member report – Department of Natural Resources

Brady Scott gave an overview of the responsibilities of the Department of Natural Resources

(DNR). Brady works in the Aquatic Resources Division of DNR. The mission of the division is to achieve protection of aquatic resources while balancing the need for economic development. There are four mandates of the division: encouraging public access, fostering water dependent uses, ensuring environmental protection, and utilizing the renewable resources. With regard to environmental protection, DNR has projects aimed at cleaning up contaminated sediments, restoring near shore habitats, removing derelict vessels, and establishing aquatic reserves in Puget Sound. DNR also allocates geoduck resources for harvest as well as supporting geoduck aquaculture. The state of Washington is owner and manager of over 2.6 million acres of aquatic lands. About 70% of tidelands were transferred into private ownership shortly after statehood. The aquatic resource region is split into three districts. Brady gave an account of his background -- his experience as a fisheries observer, his work on spotted owl program, his work on the spartina management program in Willapa Bay, a stint for a non profit organization of southeast Alaska, and his employment at the Alaska DNR. He and his wife recently moved back to Washington. There are some initiatives within the division on conservation leasing. In addition, as part of a Jefferson County Marine Resource Committee project, DNR issued a lease for buoys to delineate the eelgrass meadow off Port Townsend so that boaters refrain from anchoring in the eelgrass.

U.S. Navy NW Training Range Proposal and the Keyport Complex Proposal

George Hart updated members on the two Navy proposals training ranges within and adjacent to the sanctuary. The Keyport Complex DEIS is slated for release in September, 2008 for public comment. The NW Training Range DEIS will likely be issued in January 5th of 2009. The Navy is working to develop new acoustic harassment thresholds for marine mammals. The numbers have developed from the Hawaii Training Range and are being used for the NW Training Range. The NW Training Range proposal would involve an increasing frequency of use for the ranges with a greater number of ships involved. George Galasso explained that the lack of information about specific activities or frequency of activities in the part of the military operating areas that overlap the sanctuary waters will make it difficult for the sanctuary program to assess possible impacts. Katie Krueger expressed concerns that there is a lack of data and no plan to develop more data on what is known about the present toxic levels and radiation levels from previous training activities on the health of the ecosystem and coastal residents who heavily rely on fish taken from the area. Terrie asked the members to consider how the advisory council as a whole would comment on the Keyport DEIS due out September 12th. **The advisory council agreed by consensus to form a working group to comment on that DEIS with the following members: John Calambokidis, Katie Krueger, Doug Fricke, Diane Butorac, Jennifer Hagen, Meri Parker.**

Management Plan Review/Condition Report Update

George Galasso explained that based on the input from the advisory council and the Intergovernmental Policy Council (IPC), OCNMS decided to delay scoping meetings until the condition report was completed. OCNMS provided a pre-release draft to the PFMC for comment. The document will go out to peer reviewers shortly. The notice of intent to hold

scoping meeting will be in the Federal Register September 15th and the condition report will be available at that time. OCNMS is working on the details of the scoping meeting logistics and will be hiring a contractor to assist with the Management Plan Review (MPR) process.

As to Sanctuary Advisory Council participation, a facilitated workshop with the advisory council is planned for January of 2009. The product of this workshop will be recommendations on the priority issues to be considered in the MPR. In the spring of 2009, we will be looking for recommendations from members of the advisory council for participants in the working groups that will develop the action plans for the priority issues. In response to questions, George explained that it will take about three years to have a final management plan out to the public after scoping begins. Once priority items are selected and action plans are completed then OCNMS will prepare a DEIS or DEA for public review. Steve Copps commented that OCNMS is off to a good start with the PFMC as they work through the MPR process. PFMC members appreciated our willingness to engage with them early on, even though the committees didn't have sufficient time to thoroughly evaluate the condition report. Steve suggested generating a list of all future products that may come out through the MPR process requiring PFMC review so they have advanced warning and can advise sanctuary staff on the time required for PFMC review. He urged that, if possible, at the July Advisory Council meeting sanctuary staff provide a list of all products and what type of review process we anticipate. George said he would be willing to do that, but recognize at this point we really don't know what issues will arise and until we do, whether they may need to go to PFMC. Terrie Klinger asked how the sanctuary was planning on responding to the comments it received from the PFMC committees. George responded that staff were contacting the individual members of the committee to get further clarification and then re-editing as appropriate. The revised document will then go through peer review.

National Preparedness for Response (NPREP) oil spill drill report

Carol Bernthal reported that the NPREP drill took place the week before this meeting and was the largest table top drill in the OCNMS's history. There will be a CANPAC drill in a few weeks that will deploy equipment. The NPREP drill occurred over two days and over 150 people participated. The drill scenario was a collision at 05:00 on May 13th of a North Slope crude oil carrier with another commercial ship inbound just at the Canadian border. Because the winds are coming from the northwest, the oil quickly spread into the sanctuary and hit the shore within 48 hours. The scenario called for evaluating the use of dispersants to try to dissipate the spill. There was also an effort to find a refuge for the tanker where it could be towed. There were also logistical items to figure out like where to store equipment and where to house and feed 300 volunteers. The unified command was expanded to include the OCNMS, the Olympic National Park, Clallam County, and the Makah Tribe in addition to the Coast Guard and the responsible party. Another issue was how to manage volunteers in a safe and efficient manner.

The main lesson learned was the hope that it never happens here and that we need to keep a strong emphasis on prevention. Tough decisions have to be made quickly. Local knowledge and resource information are critical. One of the problems was conveying to some of the national participants the true nature of the coast and how difficult it would be to actually try to undertake an extensive clean up effort. Rebecca Post explained about the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process. This involves the Federal and State natural resource trustees, including the OCNMS. Their job is to assess what resources were damaged and how to restore or otherwise compensate for their loss. Teams go into the field and attempt to quantify the extent of the damage to the living and cultural resources and then place a dollar value on them. The scenario included assessment teams on the beach as well as a team out on the water sampling the water column.

Superintendent's Report

Carol Bernthal reported that she recently attended a climate change conference sponsored by the Gulf of the Farallones NMS. There is a proposal in Congress to expand the northern boundaries of the Gulf of Farallones NMS and the Cordell Bank NMS substantially. OCNMS is planning for the 2009 budget with a reduction from the this year's level, requiring tough decisions on priorities. The IPC met the previous day. Jim Wood is taking a two-year detail with EPA and will be on leave from the Makah Tribe. Ed Johnstone was elected chair of the IPC as his replacement.

There are several research cruises coming up including a marine mammal/seabird cruise on the McArthur II. An additional cruise will occur in July on the Canadian Coast Guard vessel Tully, examining the fiber optic cable route as well as deep sea corals if time allows. There was also an aerial survey of the offshore rocks and islands for seabirds colonies. It appears that a number of the rocks and islands in the southern sanctuary are being re-colonized. John Calambokidis mentioned that due to a number of recent fatalities of researchers doing aerial surveys for whales, his community of researchers is reconsidering the use of this method of surveying.

Future Agenda Topics

The next meeting is July 18th and will be either in La Push or some other location on the coast. In September we will taking up the Navy Keyport DEIS comments. Other potential items include getting someone to address us from NOAA fisheries to talk about the entanglement program and invite Ed Miles for University of Washington to talk about climate change.